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Irving E. Rockwood, Editor and Publisher, takes Us Inside Choice

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Choice

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Inside Choice

by Irving E. Rockwood (Editor and Publisher, Choice) <irockwood@ala-choice.org>

All organizations are shaped by their history, and *Choice* is no exception. Since July 1963, when the *Choice* editorial office first opened its doors, *Choice* has been located in the quiet little city of Middletown, Connecticut — also the home of Wesleyan University. Initially housed on the Wesleyan campus, *Choice* quickly outgrew its office space in Wesleyan's Olin Library, emigrating in early 1965 to more spacious accommodations at 42 Broad Street a short distance away. In January 1966, *Choice* moved again, this time to its present location at 100 Riverview Center — still within a few minutes walk of the Wesleyan campus. A time traveler searching for *Choice* after a prolonged absence might traverse a few extra blocks before finding the current location but would run little risk of missing the office altogether.

Much else about *Choice* has remained constant over its history. It is today, and has been since its inception, a publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association. For a brief interval, the *Choice* editor reported to the Executive Director of ALA. However, *Choice* is now and has long been an integral part of ACRL — the largest ALA division. The “fit” with ACRL — which also publishes three other journals and a monograph series — is a good one. Thanks to the ACRL connection, *Choice* staff have easy access to the resources of the ACRL and ALA home offices in Chicago and, equally important, to ACRL members, many of whom serve as *Choice* reviewers, advisors, or editorial board members.

Similarly, from the beginning *Choice* has been a nonprofit enterprise. Originally launched with the assistance of a \$150,000 grant from the Council on Library Resources, *Choice* quickly became financially self-sustaining. As its expenses — like those of most publishers — have increased steadily over the years, so has *Choice*'s annual operating budget. Today, it is approximately \$1.8 million. Now, as in years past, the objective is to ensure that annual revenues at least equal expenses. Most years they do.

Finally, there has been considerable continuity over the years in *Choice*'s method of operation, review format, and, most important, its basic mission. *Choice* was originally created to fill a gap that existed between the popular review media such as *The New York Times Book Review*, then-existing library review journals such as *Booklist* and *Library Journal* — aimed primarily at the high school and small- to medium-sized public library, and the professional journals whose primary audience is faculty and graduate students. Its mission was, and is, to select and review titles of greatest interest to college libraries, faculty, and students. As Richard Gardner, the first editor of *Choice*, noted in the inaugural issue: “For many years college librarians have sought a journal that would meet their book reviewing needs more specifically than either the popular media or the too-long delayed scholarly reviews. This [the first issue of *Choice*] is the Association of College and Research Libraries' answer to that need. Thanks to a grant from the Council on Library Resources, ACRL is now able to begin publication of this new book selection guide on a monthly basis.” (See Richard Gardner, “In the Balance,” *Choice* March 1964, page 13.)

Despite the many obvious continuities, some things at *Choice* have changed over the years. *Choice* some years ago expanded its review portfolio to include electronic materials and will shortly begin reviewing Web sites. As a result, *Choice*'s original subtitle — *Books for College Libraries* — has given way to the more inclusive *Current Reviews for Academic Libraries*. No longer simply a “book selection guide,” *Choice* continues to review more new scholarly books than any other review source even as

it extends its coverage to include a broad range of electronic materials.

A Word about Title Selection

The *Choice* title selection process is highly selective. Of the 22,500 titles submitted, only about 6,600 — roughly 30 percent — will be reviewed in *Choice*. How do *Choice* subject editors select titles for review? While there are many possible answers to this question, the selection process at *Choice* is heavily influenced by two key factors — *Choice*'s basic mission and a written selection policy.

Choice's primary mission, as noted earlier, is to select and review titles of greatest interest to college libraries, faculty, and students. College libraries, therefore, are *Choice*'s primary audience, and our title selection is heavily influenced by this consideration. This does not mean that *Choice* never reviews titles which might be of interest to public libraries, special libraries, or research libraries. On the contrary, we would like to think that a goodly proportion of the titles reviewed in *Choice* are of interest to one or more of these other constituencies — and most are. It does mean, however, that our primary focus is on titles of interest to the undergraduate curriculum. Titles primarily aimed at some other audience — e.g., faculty, graduate students, the general public — will generally only be reviewed in *Choice* if they are also of interest to and written at a level appropriate for undergraduates.

Given the importance of the selection process, *Choice* has for some years had a written selection policy which is periodically updated and published in the magazine. As of this writing, the *Choice* Editorial Board and staff are revising the current selection policy, which dates from 1993, and an updated version will be issued before the end of calendar 1997. The complete policy is too lengthy to reprint here, but the three principal criteria can be summarized as follows:

Readership level: The subject matter must be presented primarily at a level appropriate for undergraduate use, whether in a four-year college, community college, or university environment.

Content: The content must complement the undergraduate curriculum and be suitable for inclusion in an academic library collection.

Quality: The authors or producers must display command of the subject matter, and the material must be presented in a comprehensive, well-organized, and understandable manner. The work must contain appropriate supporting apparatus such as an index, illustrations, bibliography, notes, and appendices.

Other considerations include:

Language: *Choice* generally reviews only English language titles — with some exceptions such as foreign language dictionaries.

Place of Publication or Production, and Price: Works may be published in any country, but a price in U.S. currency must be available.

Publisher: Vanity press titles are not reviewed. Otherwise, the identity of the publisher has little impact on selection save that university press titles sometimes receive special consideration. Titles from small presses and alternative publishers are selected whenever possible since they may never be reviewed elsewhere.

Publication or Release Date: Submissions must be timely. *Choice* emphasizes currency and strives to send all titles selected out for review no later than three months following publication. Titles received more than six months after publication will gen-

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erally not be reviewed except under special circumstances.

Review copy: *Choice* reviews only the finished version of a work, not a prepublication form such as galley proofs, page proofs, or a beta version of an electronic title.

In addition, there are a variety of materials which *Choice* reviews only rarely. These include:

- Instructional manuals and how-to items;
- Children's titles;
- Reprints;
- Symposia and festschriften;
- Textbooks.

Revisions are also generally not reviewed. However, exceptions are made whenever there have been major changes or there has been a relatively long interval between editions — particularly in the case of major reference works.

Of course, in the end, the title selection process is never completely "cut and dried." *Choice* editors can and do make exceptions to the rules — or create new ones as needed. The title selection process at *Choice* is inevitably a work in progress. At its heart lies the subject editor, whose training and experience is the single most critical variable in the title selection equation.

How Choice Works

Year in and year out a steady stream of new titles — approximately 22,500 each year — flows into the *Choice* mailroom at 100 Riverview Center. And each year, the *Choice* staff sifts, sorts, and somehow converts this flood of raw material into approximately 6,600 authoritative, brief, critical reviews suitable for consumption by *Choice* readers and subscribers. How is this done?

The short answer is with lots of help, particularly from our loyal reviewers. Since the very beginning, one of the secrets of *Choice*'s success has been its pool of reviewers — now approximately 3,000 in number. *Choice* reviewers are primarily college faculty, but there are also a number of academic librarians. Reviewers fill out a form each year which indicates the maximum number of titles they are willing to review, their current research interests, and, most important, their current address, phone number, and other contact information. In essence, they agree in advance to review up to X number of titles in a specified number of fields and leave it to the *Choice* subject editors to determine which, if any, titles they will actually receive over the course of the year. (The trusting nature of the *Choice* reviewer-editor relationship has sometimes led to unexpected outcomes. Mix-ups in the mail room have occasionally resulted in titles being sent to reviewers in fields bearing little if any connection to the subject of the work. While most of the reviewers involved have immediately called to report the error, several — displaying exceptional confidence in either the *Choice* editor's judgment or their own capabilities — have simply proceeded to review the work in question, punctually submitting their review by the agreed upon date.) *Choice* reviewers are unpaid save that they are allowed — in most cases — to retain any titles they review. They review for *Choice* because they want to, or perhaps because they feel they should, and they are essential to *Choice*'s ability to perform its mission. Without our reviewers, there would be no *Choice*.

But before any title is sent out for review, someone must first examine it, determine whether it meets *Choice*'s selection criteria, and then assign it to an appropriate reviewer. At *Choice*, that someone is the subject editor. *Choice* subject editors are a diverse lot, but they have in common a strong — "intense" might be a more appropriate term — interest in their subject areas, a tangible sense of enthusiasm for their work, and a great deal of skill. They also have a great deal of experience. The average tenure of the current editorial team — 6 editors in all — is a bit

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Just an Average Day

(reprinted by permission from *Choice*, March 1997)

Here at *Choice* an average day begins around 7:30 AM. The first arrival, typically Nancy, Beth, Lisa, or Joan, disarms the new security system, turns on the office lights and is shortly joined by several other early risers. For a short while, all is relatively quiet.

The pace picks up just before 8:00 AM when the next big contingent, including the Editor & Publisher, makes its appearance. As the E&P scans his email, pours himself a second cup of morning coffee, and resumes his dubious quest for great insights into the future of publishing, the remainder of the staff goes to work. By 8:15, Saul has opened the mail room — Steven is processing subscriptions — Pam has begun fielding calls in Ad Sales — the editors have begun sifting through their overnight email and faxes — Joan and Evelyn have stationed themselves at the reception desks — and the gentle hum of the early morning has given way to the staccato rhythm of the workday.

Towards mid-morning, the mail arrives, and with it the next installment of books and electronic titles from publishers. The task of opening these packages, sorting their contents, and routing new titles to the appropriate editor falls to Saul. Meanwhile, the subject editors are selecting titles for review, assigning them to reviewers, and going over incoming reviews and manuscripts. Nancy is creating bibliographic records for all outgoing titles. Kris is solving the latest office computer problem. Barbara is working on one or more editorial projects. And the publishing assistants, who also assist Nancy with cataloguing, are entering reviews into the *Choice* database — but only after they have been carefully edited and proofed by *Choice*'s indefatigable copy editor, **David Durgin** with the assistance of our time-tested freelancers, Chris and Rita.

As the day wears on, these efforts produce measurable results. On an average day at *Choice*:

- Each of the full-time editors — Becky, Bob, Helen, and Judith — will evaluate 20 new books and electronic titles, selecting five for review and setting aside the remaining 15.
- Our two part-time editors — Fran (who happens also to be the managing editor) and Ken — will receive roughly half of that number.
- Nancy, Evelyn and Joan will together catalog an average of 28.7 new titles.
- Evelyn, Joan, and Sharon — with assistance from Josie — will enter 27.3 new reviews into the *Choice* database.
- Saul will unpack, sort, and route nearly 100 incoming titles, ship 28.7 outgoing titles to reviewers, and process 194.5 additional pieces of outgoing mail, not including overnight and UPS shipments.
- Josie will prepare and send to publishers 10 editorial requests for new titles or publisher catalogs.
- Lisa will lay out 8 magazine pages and put 26.4 reviews into *Reviews on Cards* format.
- Steven will process 30+ subscriptions, generate 302.4 mailing labels, and handle 10.8 customer service claims.
- Stu and Pam will sell 2.3 more pages of advertising space.
- The Editor & Publisher will consume at least two more cups of coffee.

And then the day winds down. The official end of the *Choice* workday comes at 4:30, and with it the noise in the general office area begins to subside. Slowly, the staff drifts away, and darkness settles over the outer offices. Somewhere around 6:00 PM the last holdout finally departs. Still and dark, the *Choice* office waits for morning, and the start of another average workday. 🌿

more than 13 years, with only one editor having less than 10 years of service. Finally, most *Choice* editors have both an M.L.S. and academic library experience, a longstanding tradition which ensures that the individuals making selection decisions are familiar with the needs of the audience they serve.

This experience is particularly helpful as the editors scrutinize publisher catalogs, journal ads, and attend conferences in search of promising new titles, a key aspect of their job. For *Choice* editors do not simply sit back and wait for publishers to submit new titles to *Choice*. To be sure, many scholarly publishers — particularly university presses — automatically send *Choice* review copies of all their new titles on publication. However, this is neither practical nor desirable in many instances. It would be extremely wasteful, for example, if *Choice* were to automatically receive a copy of all new titles published by a major commercial house such as Simon & Schuster. Accordingly, *Choice* subject editors spend a goodly portion of their time on the lookout for new titles of interest. Together, *Choice* editors — with staff assistance — regularly track the title output of more than 400 U.S. and foreign publishers currently listed in the *Choice* publisher database and systematically identify and request copies of new titles that may be of potential interest to college libraries. One result of this effort is a steady stream of outgoing requests for review copies of new titles, promotional materials, and the like.

It is, therefore, the combined efforts of publishers and the *Choice* editorial staff that generate the previously mentioned inflow of 22,500 titles per year — a total which represents nearly half of the total annual U.S. book output. Even arriving in dribs and drabs, as it necessarily does, it is an impressive sight, a veritable book lover's dream — but also a tangible reminder of work to be done.

Incoming titles are first unpacked, sorted by LC classification area, and then routed to the appropriate *Choice* subject editor. It is the subject editor's task to determine whether the title is suitable for review. In theory, the decision-making process is a fairly straightforward one in which the editor examines the title, ascertains whether it meets *Choice*'s current editorial selection criteria, and, if so, assigns it to an appropriate reviewer. Happily, the theory works. Week after week, month after month, the *Choice* editorial staff does its thing, swiftly, steadily, and surely processing an average of 90-100 new titles each working day.

To be sure, the selection process does not always flow smoothly. One common "glitch" arises from the difficulty involved in classifying some titles, particularly those which are interdisciplinary. If, for example, Helen is the editor responsible for history, Bob is responsible for reference, and Ken is responsible for art, which one is responsible for a new historical guide to women artists? Good question. The answer may well involve routing the book seriatim to all three editors to determine for which section, if any, it is appropriate. This process will, of course, eventually produce an answer, but it will also consume valuable time, thus delaying a selection decision, even if only for a short while.

As important as it is to *Choice*'s basic mission, title selection represents but a small fraction of the time and energy which goes into publishing *Choice*. As at most publishing houses, the lion's share of the work occurs after the decision to publish, not before. An experienced editor can often determine whether a title is suitable for review within a matter of a few minutes. Translating that decision into a finished *Choice* review, however, takes considerably longer. It is also very much a team effort, involving the entire *Choice* editorial and production staff.

Editing and production procedures at *Choice* have changed considerably over the years. One constant, however, has been a willingness to experiment with relatively new technologies. Indeed, the first one or two issues of *Choice* were produced using a

device known as a "sequential camera." There is little information in the *Choice* files about the exact nature of this device or the associated production process. What is clear is that the experiment was unsuccessful. (Unsuccessful may be a gentle description. In his article entitled "Reminiscences of Early Years," which appeared in the April 1984 issue of *Choice*, Richard Gardner used the term "nightmare" to describe this apparently not-quite-ready-for-prime-time process.) As a result, it was quickly abandoned in favor of the relatively new — and apparently more practical — photocomposition techniques then finding their way into journal publishing.

Today, *Choice* makes use of a variety of new electronic publishing tools, which have in turn reshaped the editing and production process. Chief among these is the *STAR* database software, which now houses the complete corpus of all *Choice* reviews published — or in process — from 1988 to the present. Thanks to the *STAR* system, *Choice* has been able to enter into a variety of licensing arrangements with vendors such as SilverPlatter, Reed, Brodart, CARL, and Primary Source Media, all of whom currently produce electronic products which include *Choice* reviews.

Similarly, *Choice* makes use of desktop publishing techniques to prepare material for the printer. All layout for both the magazine and *Reviews on Cards* — an ancillary publication consisting of the *Choice* reviews printed on 3 x 5 cards — is currently done in-house using the Macintosh version of Quark. This procedure has wholly eliminated the traditional "galley proof-page proof" sequence following delivery of final manuscript to the printer. Indeed, save for advertising, which is still delivered to the printer in traditional "repro" form, both the magazine and *Reviews on Cards* are delivered to the printer on diskette. As a result, *Choice*'s typesetting and composition expenses are today much lower than in years past, a helpful economy in an era of otherwise steadily increasing costs.

So what exactly does happen from the time *Choice* receives a new title through publication of the review? That surprisingly complex process currently looks something like this:

- Step 1. Incoming titles arrive in mailroom.
- Step 2. Titles are sorted by LC classification for routing to proper subject editor.
- Step 3. Editor selects title for review and assigns it to a qualified reviewer.
- Step 4. Editor records assignment on reviewer card and blue form.
- Step 5. Editor forwards title to library technical assistant for bibliographic processing.
- Step 6. *STAR* bibliographic record is created from "book in hand".
- Step 7. Title and review form are mailed to reviewer.
- Step 8. Review arrives via fax or mail.
- Step 9. Publishing assistant logs in review using *STAR* and routes to subject editor.
- Step 10. Editor logs in review and edits for organization and content (Optional).
- Step 10A. Editor queries author as necessary.
- Step 11. Editor routes edited review to publishing assistants for data entry.
- Step 12. Publishing assistants enter review into *STAR* and generate 1st page proof.
- Step 13. 1st pages are proofed against original review and routed to copy editor.
- Step 14. Copy editor edits review for grammar, organization, and house style (Optional).
- Step 14A. Copy editor discusses queries with subject editor.
- Step 15. 1st page corrections entered in *STAR*, then placed in issue bins by section.
- Step 16. 2nd pages generated when all reviews entered for issue.

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- Step 17. Subject editors read and do final proofing of reviews.
Step 18. Copy editor enters final corrections in *STAR*.
Step 19. Computer manager generates file containing reviews for the forthcoming issue.
Step 20. Copy editor imports reviews into Word, runs spell check, and enters corrections.
Step 21. Production manager imports reviews, along with other editorial material, into Quark.
Step 22. Production manager lays out the issue, leaving space in Quark file for ads.
Step 23. Copy editor proofs 1st Quark pages.
Step 24. Production manager enters 1st page corrections in Quark file.
Step 25. Copy editor proofs 2nd Quark pages.
Step 26. Production manager enters final page corrections in Quark.
Step 27. Quark file shipped to printer along with repro for all space ads.

Truly, this business of publishing a review journal is more complex than one might think. And so it is, for the sequence listed above — formidable though it may seem — describes only a portion of the activities carried out at *Choice* on a daily basis. Even as the editorial mills are slowly grinding their way through a steady influx of new titles, the *Choice* editorial staff is also busily planning, commissioning, editing, or compiling all of the following:

- New bibliographic essays.
- Regular editorial features such as the annual Academic Book Price Study.
- Prepublication lists such as the Forthcoming Reference Books and Forthcoming Electronic Media features.
- Special publications such as the compilation of reviews in women's studies edited by **Helen MacLam** of the *Choice* staff, *Choice Reviews in Women's Studies, 1990-96*, which will be published by ACRL this April.
- And, of course, the *Outstanding Academic Books* list published every January.

Meanwhile, the remainder of the *Choice* team is carrying out a host of other equally essential tasks, including the selling of ad space, the maintenance and upgrading of the various *Choice* computer systems, customer service, subscription processing, and prosaic but vital tasks such as filing, bookkeeping, and planning. Indeed, on those too rare occasions when there is time to reflect, it sometimes seems as though life at *Choice* exemplifies nothing so much as the old saying, "Be like a duck — calm on the surface but paddle like the devil underneath." The paddling is what we do. The calm is what we hope our readers see.

Issues and Challenges

Choice, now entering its 34th year, has proven a durable enterprise. While considerably younger than such stalwart library publications as *Library Journal* (1876) and *Booklist* (1905), *Choice* has now outlived at least one other major library journal — *Wilson Library Bulletin* (1917-1995). Furthermore, despite the depressed state of the academic library market, *Choice's* financial performance has consistently exceeded budget for the past several years, and the current fiscal year is off to an excellent start. With a little luck, *Choice* will endure for many more years.

In order to do so, however, *Choice* cannot stand pat. To ensure its continued survival, *Choice* must adopt new strategies and tactics to cope with a changing publishing environment. While continuing to meet the needs of its present customers, *Choice* must find ways to expand its customer base and diversify its product line. And it must do so in a way that is essentially self-funding. Unlike most commercial journals, *Choice* has no corporate parent with "deep pockets" to whom it can turn for

assistance. *Choice's* future rests largely in its own hands, and there is certainly no shortage of challenges to confront. Chief among these are:

Barriers to revenue growth: *Choice's* two main revenue sources are subscriptions and ad sales. As with many library journals, *Choice's* subscriber base has been declining for some time. While the rate of decline has been extremely modest, it has meant, and continues to mean, that growth in subscription revenues can only be obtained via price increases, an ultimately self-defeating tactic. It will not be easy to reverse this trend given the state of library budgets. Similarly, until very recently, ad revenue growth has likewise been generally modest for some time as *Choice's* major advertising customers — scholarly publishers — have struggled to cope with declining library sales.

Steadily rising expenses: Even as declining print subscriptions and tight ad budgets have limited *Choice's* revenue growth, expenses have continued to rise. As with most publishers, *Choice's* single largest expense is people. Salaries and benefits constitute nearly 50 percent of *Choice's* annual operating expenses followed by printing costs (16.5 percent) and overhead (7.9 percent) — which in *Choice's* case is assessed by and paid to ALA. Together these three items account for approximately 75 percent of *Choice's* annual costs. All have grown steadily in recent years, as have most of the several dozen other items that constitute the remaining 25 percent of *Choice's* annual expenses.

Threats to *Choice's* basic mission: *Choice* was originally founded as a "book selection guide" for college libraries. Yet the proportion of college library acquisition budgets allocated to books has declined dramatically in recent years in favor of journals. In recent years, library book acquisition budgets have been further squeezed by steady growth in the share of acquisition dollars allocated to electronic materials. One result is that at most college libraries today, book purchases are increasingly limited to selected, high-priority subject areas. These trends,

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coupled with increasing use of approval plans and outsourcing, have reduced many college libraries' need for the type of service traditionally provided by *Choice*. Over the longer run, they may pose a potential threat to the future of the scholarly book itself.

Dealing with the transition to electronic publishing: Last but hardly least, *Choice*, like other scholarly journals, is in the midst of a transition to electronic publishing. While electronic publishing may, or may not, ultimately reduce *Choice*'s costs of publication — the jury is still very much out on this much discussed issue — in the short term it represents an added expense. In fact, the initial investment required to make this transition will have a significant impact on the *Choice* budget over the next several years. Some "creative" financial thinking will be required if *Choice* is to fund this transition entirely from its own limited resources.

And yet all is not gloom and doom. *Choice*'s future holds promise as well as challenges, and there are tools available for dealing with these obstacles. These include:

Increased Automation: *Choice* has a long history of "pushing the envelope" in publication technology. Some of the experiments involved, like the "sequential camera" of 1963-64, were unsuccessful. Others, like the installation of the *STAR* database in 1988, have proven highly beneficial. In the past year, *Choice* has completed the expansion of the office network (LAN) so that all staff members now have access to the network and a common set of *Windows* applications. Email was added in the spring of 1996. Web access, first provided in 1996, will shortly be greatly enhanced, and a search is now underway for a new subscription system to be purchased in the current fiscal year. In addition, we hope shortly to greatly reduce the amount of in-house keyboarding by automating the review entry process and streamlining the process by which bibliographic records are created. Within the next 12-18 months, we will begin accepting reviews by email, a process that will both increase *Choice*'s operating efficiency and

reduce the interval between title selection and the appearance of the published review.

Marketing: Over the years, *Choice* has devoted far more time and energy to editorial matters than to marketing. While this has helped ensure the quality of *Choice*'s basic product and to maintain its good name and reputation within the library community, it has also meant that marketing has been somewhat neglected. In fact, *Choice* does not currently have — and so far as I can determine never has had — a staff position devoted to marketing. By the end of the current fiscal year, it will.

Product Development: The greatest promise of all for *Choice*'s future lies here, in product development. In fact, *Choice* has already made significant strides in this area by licensing its reviews for use in electronic products from well-established library vendors such as **Reed/Bowker**, **SilverPlatter**, **CARL**, **Brodart**, and **Primary Source Media**. The great virtue of licensing is that it allows *Choice* to tap new markets — library patrons for example — at relatively little cost. Through increased efforts in this area, we hope to greatly expand *Choice*'s presence in a variety of markets that would be impossible for *Choice* to reach via its own resources. In addition, the mandatory transition to electronic publishing, however painful, will bring with it a plethora of new possibilities, including customized publications and publications directed to new audiences. Finally, by steadily increasing its coverage of new types of library materials, notably electronic products, *Choice* can and will ensure the continued relevance of its services to the library community.

As *Choice* looks forward to its 35th anniversary and beyond, it is clear that the next few years will be a time of transition. At some point in the not too distant future, it may be possible to see more clearly what lies ahead — or it may not. Perhaps *Choice*, like other human organizations, will continue to chart its course from day to day, its daily maneuvers shaped by the tides and breezes of the present even as it steers toward a future that invariably lies tantalizingly close yet always just over the horizon. Of this we can be sure. If *Choice*'s future continues to be shaped by its past, there is great cause for optimism. 🌱

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Collection Management, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand)
<gita.gunatilleke@vuw.ac.nz>.

This site has a **special report on copyright law** — including a quiz that helps determine whether you follow legal procedure — <www.news.com/Quiz/Entry>.

I have a confession to make. One of my favorite people in the world is **Glenda Alvin** (Acquisitions/Collection Management Librarian, The College of New Jersey, 609-771-2412)<alvin@TCNJ.EDU>. Glenda just sent *Against the Grain* a great article. You will read it here soon ...

Speaking of favorite people, I missed **Sharon Mckay** (Blackwell North America) <SMckay3746@aol.com> at ALA Midwinter but talked to her over the phone about **Blackwell's Collection Manager**. I did speak to **Alison Roth**, a charming and very astute salesperson herself!

The homepage for the study "Public Libraries and the Information Society" is <<http://www2.echo.lu/libraries/en/plis/homeplis.html>>.

The March 17, 1997 issue of *The Nation* is a provocative read. Called "The Crushing Power of Big Publishing: The National Entertainment State II," its fifty pages are packed with articles about the publishing era that we are living through. It's a contrast of several publishing worlds — conglomerate publishing versus serious, university, and independent publishing. You should read it and maybe write an essay about it for *Against the Grain*.

Nicholas Veliotis is retiring as president of **AAP** and **Patricia Schroeder** has accepted the position of president and CEO of the **Association of American Publishers**. Woman Power!

Well, that's about all the space we have this issue — so — see you next issue ... and Happy Spring! 🌱